

VZCZCXYZ0007
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTV #0433/01 0391049
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 081049Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9306
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUENAAA/CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 1651
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 8405
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 1546
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 2423
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 1637
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 9401
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 2372
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 9278
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 9755
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 6387
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 3774
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 8652
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 2879
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 4788
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 5889
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000433

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iraq

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that today Internal Security Minister Avi

Dichter will meet with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to discuss the three-way Rice-Olmert-Abbas meeting later this month. The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday, in testimony before the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, Secretary Rice rejected the "linkage" concept, according to which ending Israeli-Palestinian strife is the key to resolving the other conflicts in the Middle East.

Ha'aretz reported that Israeli officials have been discussing over the past few months how much financial aid Israel should request from the US in the coming years. The issue has come up for initial discussions with the Bush administration, and will be raised again at a meeting in Washington next month. Olmert is due to make the final decision on the matter. Ha'aretz said that the financial aid issue is on the table once again because the previous agreement expires this budgetary year, after being in effect for a decade.

All media led with an incident along the Israel-Lebanon border last night: IDF troops fired warning shells at Lebanese Army positions across their shared frontier, after Lebanese troops fired light weapons at IDF tanks north of the border fence, although still inside sovereign Israeli territory. IDF troops issued a warning to the Lebanese forces in the wake of the initial incident, and a short time later fired shells at the Lebanese position, opposite Moshav Avivim. There are no reports of IDF casualties, but UNIFIL reported that five soldiers in the Lebanese Army were wounded during the exchange of fire. Lebanese Army officials disputed UNIFIL claims that any soldiers were wounded, and said their forces suffered no casualties. Ha'aretz said that UNIFIL are trying to mediate. Earlier Wednesday, IDF troops crossed the border fence (but not the actual border) in the area where four Hizbullah bombs were discovered Monday, in order to search the area for additional explosive devices. Media said that this was the worst incident of its kind since the end of the second Lebanon war and the deployment of the Lebanese Army in the area as part of a UN-brokered cease-fire. Media cited Hizbullah's claim that the devices were planted before the war

Ha'aretz reported that Defense Minister Amir Peretz wrote PM Ehud Olmert on Wednesday that the work on the new bridge to the Temple Mount should be stopped immediately for fear of escalation and deterioration in the defense situation. Yediot reported that the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades threatened to attack synagogues if the works continued. In an unrelated development, Maariv cited a claim by Archaeology Prof. Joseph Patrich of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem that archaeological traces indicating the exact location of the Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount have been found. According to Patrich, the Temple was built near the southeastern corner of the mount and not on the site of the Dome of the Rock.

Ha'aretz reported that the IDF has no plans to evict six settler families that have been living in caravans inside a military camp in Hebron for over a decade, even though this situation is extraordinary and of questionable legality.

Leading media reported that on Wednesday PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas and exiled Hamas leader Khaled Mashal vowed during their meeting in Mecca to hammer out a deal on a unity government that could curb weeks of infighting and end an international blockade. However, the media quoted British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett as saying, during talks with Olmert in Jerusalem on Wednesday, that even if Hamas and Fatah form a coalition, London will shun the resulting government as long as Hamas defies international demands to recognize Israel and foreswear violence. Ha'aretz quoted FM Tzipi Livni as saying, as the Palestinian leaders met, that the world would not accept any Palestinian government that does not renounce violence, recognize Israel's right to exist and accept existing peace agreements. Israel Radio quoted Egyptian FM Ahmed Ali Abu al-Gheit as saying at the Brookings Institution's Saban Center that the diplomatic process will not be able to resume without the establishment of Palestinian unity. Yediot reported that Abbas demanded that Hamas release kidnapped IDF soldier Shalit.

The Jerusalem Post reported that sources close to Hamas told the newspaper that Mashal would demand during the summit that he be named deputy chairman of the PLO.

Leading media reported that on Wednesday the High Court of Justice instructed the Winograd Committee, which is investigating the

conduct of the second Lebanon war, to open its sessions to the public and to publish the transcripts of testimonies, whenever possible.

Israel Radio and other media reported that a US court in Miami awarded damages -- that might reach USD 48 million -- to an Israeli-American plaintiff in a lawsuit against the PA and the PLO for injuries sustained five years ago in a terrorist attack in Gush Katif in the Gaza Strip.

Maariv reported that a mass shelter protecting Jerusalem's population against nuclear and chemical attacks will be built at the city's new Central Bus Station.

The Jerusalem Post reported that, amid concerns that the US will break into the Indian defense market and steal away Israeli deals, 11 local defense companies opened the doors to the Israeli Pavilion on Wednesday at the prestigious Aero India defense expo in Bangalore. The newspaper also reported that, for the first time, a high-ranking IAF commander is participating in a joint aerospace workshop with air force chiefs from Muslim countries that do not have official diplomatic relations with Israel. The seminar, "Aerospace Power in Tomorrow's World," was held in New Delhi.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter and his counterpart, Homeland Security Chertoff, signed a joint memorandum in Washington setting a series of goals and terms for security collaboration between the two nations.

Yehonatan Gefen of Maariv cited the improved ease in procuring a US visa at the American Embassy in Tel Aviv.

Maariv reported Iran announced on Wednesday that it successfully test-fired a state-of-the art Tor-M1 anti-aircraft system that it recently purchased from Russia

Ha'aretz quoted sources close to Olmert as saying that he is considering rejecting an understanding between the Labor Party and Yisrael Beiteinu for a ministerial reshuffle. The arrangement would turn over the science and sport portfolio to Yisrael Beiteinu and leave the Welfare Ministry in Labor's hands. Ha'aretz wrote that a rejection by the arrangement by the PM would mean the cabinet reshuffle may not be completed for a few days. The Jerusalem Post quoted Kadima officials as saying on Wednesday that a new minister of Diaspora affairs will be appointed along with other new ministries on Sunday.

Ha'aretz reported that this week Interior Minister Roni Bar-On decided to permit the young children of non-Jews married to Israeli citizens to receive the same immigration status as the immigrant parent.

Ha'aretz cited a study released on Wednesday by Brandeis University in Massachusetts that found that between 6 million and 6.4 million Jews -- about 1 million more than was previously thought.

Yediot cited a University of California report recommending that the US armed forces adopt the IDF's policy on drafting gays and lesbians.

All media reported that Tel Aviv University Prof. Daniel Friedmann (proper spelling) was sworn in as Justice Minister on Wednesday.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Microsoft Israel has not warned Israeli customers or retailers that Vista, Microsoft's new computer operating system, is not compatible with, and will not work on their PCs.

Ha'aretz presented the results of The Aviv University's Peace Index poll conducted on January 29-31: 84 percent of Israeli Jews believe that Israel should not intervene in the Palestinians' internal struggle; 11 percent believe it should; and 5 percent are undecided.

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "The situation in the Temple Mount area must be dealt with with sensitivity and intelligence -- but also with resolution, to safeguard crucial Israeli interests that were determined two generations ago and retain their validity to this day."

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in Ha'aretz: "If the choice is between pursuing the ideological war against terror and a realistic policy that would preserve Olmert's government, Bush prefers the ideology."

Gilad Sharon, son of former prime minister Ariel Sharon, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "[Israeli settlement of the Golan] is the price of Syrian aggression in the past. What was done cannot be undone."

Columnist Shaul Schiff wrote in the nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "Since Hosni Mubarak was elected President of Egypt he has not ceased to try to covertly destabilize Israel's status in every possible way."

Block Quotes:

II. "Temple Mount Truths"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (2/8): "The excavation work and bridge construction near the Mugrabi ramp have turned into the Battle of Armageddon, as happens every time the Temple Mount and its environs are involved. Who can withstand the temptation to get involved in the religious-national conflict embodied in the Temple Mount, a conflict that has already been compared to a ticking bomb with apocalyptic powers of destruction?.... It is worth mentioning, for those who have forgotten and those who would like to make others forget, that the situation that prevails at the Temple Mount and the Western Wall plaza is based on a quite stable status quo that has been in place for 40 years. David Ben-Gurion described the situation in June 1967 by saying: "The Western Wall is for the Jews at the moment, and the Temple Mount is for the Muslims at the moment, and that is the reality we have to accept." At the same time, Moshe Dayan determined that the Mugrabi Gate would remain in Israel's exclusive control, to prevent the Muslim authorities from having the ability to unilaterally close all the gates to the Temple Mount.... The incitement against the construction of the bridge is a clear attempt to undercut the status quo. Therefore, it must not influence the authorities' decision to replace the temporary bridge. The activity of the security forces, which ensures that the work is carried out, deserves full support. All the same, we must remember that the status quo applies not only to the Western Wall plaza, but also to the Temple Mount.... The situation in the Temple Mount area must be dealt with with sensitivity and intelligence -- but also with resolution, to safeguard crucial Israeli interests that were determined two generations ago and retain their validity to this day."

II. "Bush Vs. Olmert"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in Ha'aretz (2/8): "The support of the US administration is a central pillar of Ehud Olmert's government.... [Then again] the only thing that can increase support for Olmert is a renewal of the negotiations with Syria. Most of the public is in favor of a positive response to Bashar Assad.... [Such] talks would improve stability in the North and distance the danger of another war this summer, a possibility that is becoming lodged in Israeli awareness as a type of unavoidable disaster. But Olmert has a problem: Bush is not allowing him to talk to Assad. American officials who are asked about a revival of the Syrian channel respond by reading out the long list of crimes committed by Damascus, including its support for terror from Gaza to Baghdad. If the choice is between pursuing the ideological war against terror and a realistic policy that would preserve Olmert's government, Bush prefers the ideology. But there may be another explanation, which is more worrisome for Olmert: that the Americans assume he cannot survive, and it's a waste to help a

bankrupt enterprise."

III. "What Is Good For the Alawites"

Gilad Sharon, son of former prime minister Ariel Sharon, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (2/7): "We are being threatened with the equation: Either you hand the Golan Heights to the Syrians, or Syria will attack you. But the correct equation, that should also be clear to the Syrians, should be: If you attack us, not only will you not get the Golan, but your regime -- the minority dictatorship of the Alawite sect -- will also be at risk. This is the place to explain that the Alawite minority, which represents a mere 12 percent of Syria's population, is a pagan religious sect that reveres the sun and the moon.... Syria does not -- and will not -- have any policy except a domestic one: saving the regime.... Even if the Alawite regime had received the Golan, but if it understood that aggressiveness against Israel would have served its continuation, it would have pursued [an aggression policy vis-a-vis Israel].... [Israeli settlement of the Golan] is the price of Syrian aggression in the past. What was done cannot be undone."

IV. "Our Southern Neighbor -- A Tangible Threat"

Columnist Shaul Schiff wrote in the nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe (2/7): "Since Hosni Mubarak was elected President of Egypt he has not ceased to try to covertly destabilize Israel's status in every possible way.... IDF Intelligence sources are right when they say that Mubarak has shown generosity only when his actions involved patent American interests or when the step he took eventually served to uphold his regime.... Israel is absolutely unprepared to a coup in Egypt or surrender to the mood of the Arab street. Within one or two years Israel would be surprised by the amount of various weapons appearing in the Gaza Strip. This would be the malodorous product of reliance on Egypt to act effectively to prevent arms smuggling from the Sinai to the Strip."

12. Iraq:

Summary:

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "By staving off the withdrawal, the Bush administration's escalation of the war is just delaying America's inevitable defeat."

Block Quotes:

"It's Bush Vs. America -- And Bush Wins"

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (2/8): "What's going on in Washington now is unbelievable -- Bush is getting away with it. He's escalating the war in Iraq. He's sending 21,500 more soldiers over there. Nobody's stopping him, nobody's going to, either -- not the Democrats, not the new Republican realists and not American public opinion, where Bush is heading down to Nixon's Watergate level.... So by staving off the withdrawal, the Bush administration's escalation of the war is just delaying America's inevitable defeat. The only lasting difference the surge will make is to increase the number of American soldiers getting killed and maimed. The majority of senators and congressmen, Democrats and Republicans both, now understand this. And since they understand, but lack the courage to use their power to force Bush to wind down this war, the American blood about to be spilled for nothing will be on their hands, too."